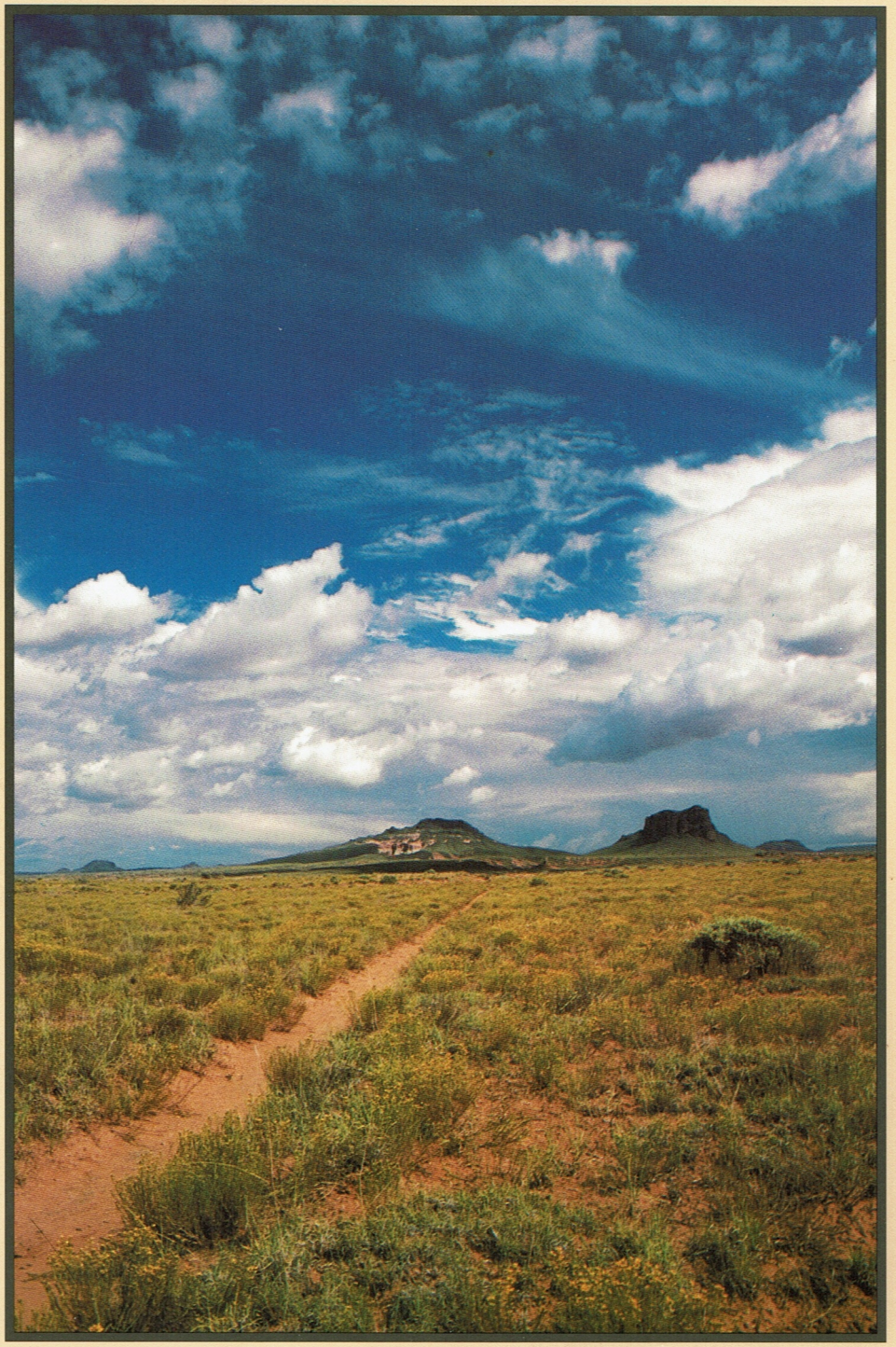
The PALATKWAPI TRAIL



Plateau magazine of the Museum of Northern Arizona

This publication is Volume 59, Number 4
in a continuing series, *Plateau*, published quarterly
by the Museum of Northern Arizona

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ISSN 0032-1346

Postmaster: send change of address to:
The Museum of Northern Arizona Press
Route 4, Box 720
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

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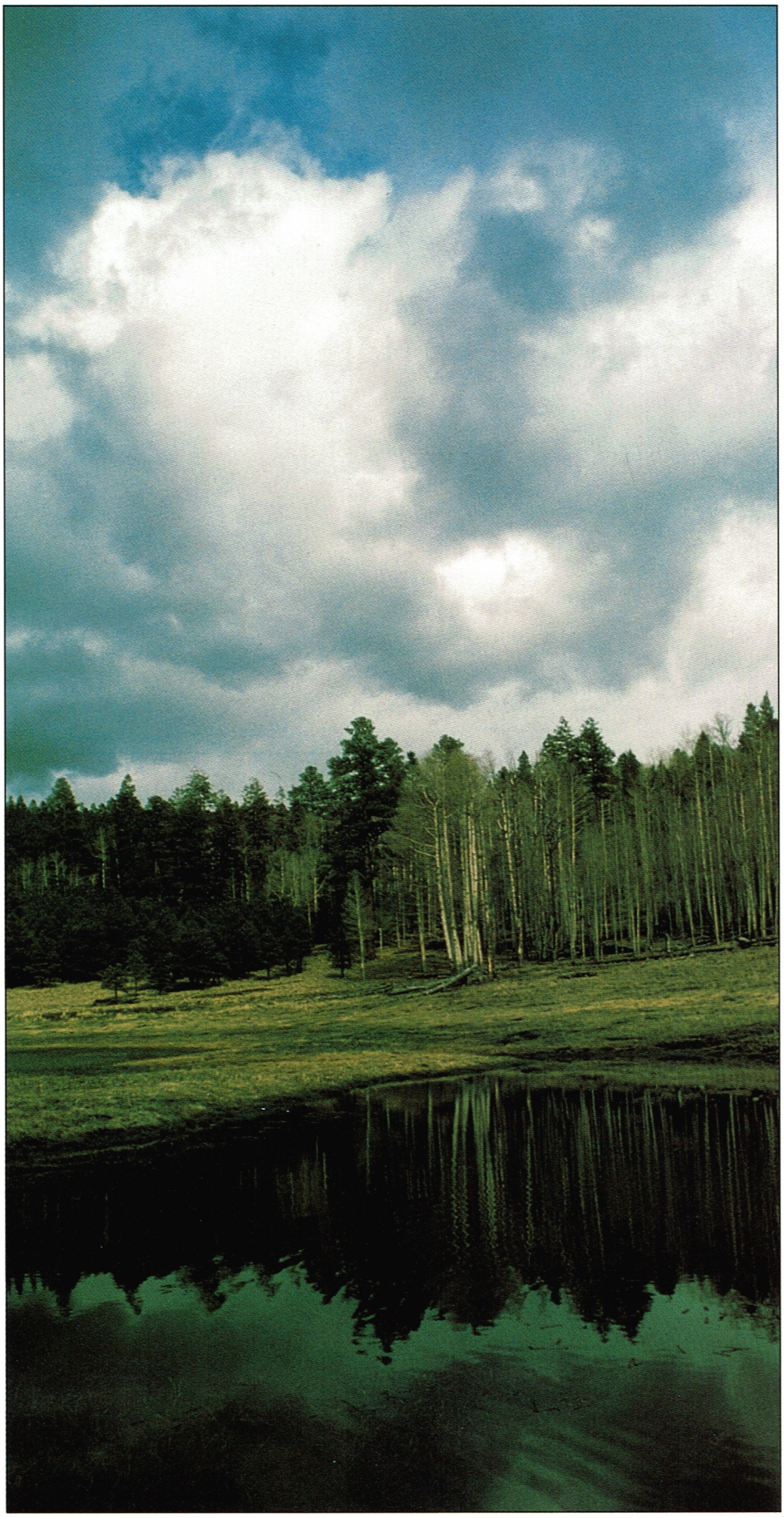


Left: Natural tanks were important water sources for travelers on the Palatkwapi Trail.
Opposite: The trail near Rattlesnake Canyon

A Note from the Author

More than forty-five years ago, in central Arizona's Verde Valley, where I was born and grew up, the region's oldtimers told me that there was an old road called the "Chavez Trail" that went from the Verde Valley to Winslow, Arizona, by way of Stoneman Lake. I never forgot their stories and remained curious about this trail.

Years later, I read an article in the *New Mexico Historical Review* written by the Museum of Northern Arizona's Katharine Bartlett. The author stated that in 1583 Indians from the Hopi villages guided Spanish conquistadores down to mines located where Jerome, Arizona, is today. While she offered several general route possibilities and did not identify a precise path or road, Ms. Bartlett felt there was good reason to believe that the Hopi Indians used a route from their villages through Winslow to Jerome that corresponded closely to what might have been known three hundred years later as the "Chavez Trail."

In April of 1976, Hopi scholar Emory Sekaquaptewa told me a story taken from Hopi history about "Palatkwapi," the ancient home of several Hopi clans. He believed that Palatkwapi was located in the Verde Valley. I was intrigued. An initial investigation convinced me that there might be some connection between the Palatkwapi story, Ms. Bartlett's article, and the "Chavez Trail."

I was encouraged by ethnological evidence which indicated that for centuries the Hopis and other Indians journeyed to Jerome to mine copper ores, such as azurite and malachite. Apparently, these ores were ground to red, blue, and green powders and used for ceremonial and other cosmetic and decorative purposes. The Hopis also traveled to a salt mine about twenty miles south of Jerome, near where Camp Verde is today.

From United States Army records in Washington, D.C.'s National Archives, I discovered that an army officer named J. Francisco Chaves (he spelled it with an "s," while popular usage employs a "z") did, indeed, use a trail from the Verde Valley to Winslow ("Sunset Crossing" it was called at the time), and it conformed in general to the route used by the Hopis and Spaniards. Continued research then opened a treasure of supporting data. Diaries, memoirs, and newspaper accounts, together with additional military and other government reports, make it clear that a unique and very precise path ran from the Hopi villages to the Verde Valley by way of Winslow.

Within a short period of time, I found dozens of nineteenth-century maps of the region showing the trail. Virtually all of the maps indicated the exact same route.

In the process of my research, I learned that a few Hopis had used the trail up until 1940 and that herders still use a short section of it to drive sheep up to the high country in the springtime. But no twentieth-century historians, ethnologists, or other scholars had ever shown any awareness of the ancient trail and its significance.

How was this possible? I had to know more. As I searched the records, a picture emerged of a unique Arizona heritage that began in mythology yet could be documented, at least in part. Although the trail links a heritage common to all the people of the region, both past and present, I decided to name the road the "Palatkwapi Trail" to honor its first users and their descendents.

With considerable assurance, we can assume the Palatkwapi Trail has been traveled continuously for more than 1200 years. In view of the region's archaeological past, it is likely that prehistoric people used the trail for several thousand years and that this old road served as an important section of an extensive prehistoric trade route system that went from Colorado and New Mexico through Arizona west to the Pacific Ocean in California and south to northern Mexico.

The Palatkwapi Trail

The Hopi people and their ancestors have lived in villages on their flat-topped mesas in northeastern Arizona for more than 1300 years. One of these villages, Oraibi, is the oldest continuously inhabited community in the United States. For nearly a century, archaeologists have tried to find out when these people came to their mesas and from where. Considerable archaeological evidence about Hopi origins, such as language and oral tradition similarities, pottery design, trade items such as seashells, and the age and location of both occupied and abandoned pueblos, strongly supports Hopi legend.

According to Hopi tradition, several Hopi clans at one time lived in a warm, well-watered region to the south, a region the Hopis call "Palatkwapi"—"Place of the Red Rocks." The legend says that after all of the Hopi people had emerged from the underworld, a large group of them came to Palatkwapi. Here they remained for a long time. A number of Hopi clans lived in Palatkwapi: the Rain Cloud, the Water, the Young Corn, the Tadpole, the Frog, the Snow, the Rabbit Brush, the Tobacco, the Sand, the Parrot, and several other clans.

As time went by, these clans built Palatkwapi into a great cultural and religious center. They enjoyed the help and support of guardian spirits, or deities—including Eototo, the deity of the Bear clan, a chief of the *kachinas*. The deities told the Palatkwapi people that they were to migrate to other places before settling down permanently. But the good life in this place of the red rocks caused these people to postpone their migration.

Because the region was warm, fertile, and blessed with abundant springs and streams, the Palatkwapi Hopis were well-fed, prosperous, and secure. They enjoyed a great deal of leisure time; eventually, they became self-indulgent.

Left: Hopi tradition tells of laziness and self-indulgence among Hopi ancestors at Palatkwapi. Photograph courtesy of Northern Arizona University, Emory Kolb Collection

As time passed, they forgot their responsibilities and spent all their time in the pursuit of pleasure. Although the kachinas cautioned them, no one paid attention. Even many of the priests and leaders joined in the degenerate revelry.

Eventually, virtuous Hopi leaders appealed to the gods to bring a great flood to punish the irresponsible inhabitants. Clouds gathered, and a great rain began to come down, heavier and heavier. Soon there was water everywhere, and the Palatkwapi people were forced to abandon their homes and villages and escape to higher ground. As they viewed their homeland covered with water, they gave up all hope of returning to it.

Not long afterward, the clans from Palatkwapi began a slow northeastward migration, building a series of pueblos along the way where they could rest and grow their blue corn. It is said that they settled at a place called Kwitsalvi for some years. At one pueblo, Homolovi, swarms of insects arrived and bit the suckling children, bringing much suffering and forcing the refugees to move again. Many of them settled for a while at Paqatsomo, in the Walpi Valley.

Top: Hopi beating drum. Photograph courtesy of Northern Arizona University Special Collections
Bottom: Hopi design element illustrating part of the Palatkwapi legend. Courtesy of Harold Courlander from *The Fourth World of the Hopi*

Certain versions of Hopi history say that over the many years that this migration took place, old people died and children were born. Eventually, no one remained who could speak knowingly of Palatkwapi.

Finally, the wanderers came to the village of Walpi, on the First Mesa, where they were met by the Snake Chief, who asked them where they were coming from and whether they wanted to live at Walpi. To earn acceptance, the chief of the Water clan demonstrated his ability to bring rain. Realizing the great power possessed by the Water clan people, the Snake Chief and the residents of Walpi made the refugees welcome and assigned them fields on the south side of the mesa. A number of the refugees went to other villages. Here, at last, the Palatkwapi people returned to their old, temperate, disciplined, and responsible ways.

Just where was Palatkwapi? Some archaeologists believe that Palatkwapi was a valley in northern Mexico, perhaps near Casas Grandes, in Chihuahua. Others say it was in southern or central Arizona, the upper Gila River Valley, for instance. But around 1900, an archaeologist from the Smithsonian Institution held another theory. Jesse Walter Fewkes believed that Palatkwapi was north-central Arizona's lush and stream-blessed Verde Valley. Fewkes argued that the migration of the people in the Hopi legend coincided with archaeological evidence—both in time and in place.

Top: Nuvakwewtaqa Ruins at Chavez Pass
Left: Montezuma's Well, a deep, natural sink that today is part of a national monument
Opposite: In Hopi legend, Homolovi is one of the sites occupied by some clans during their period of migration after leaving Palatkwapi.

The evidence indicates that around the year 1300 a series of pueblos marked a route from the Verde River northeastward to the Hopi Mesas. They were located at what now is called Montezuma's Well; Nuvakwewtaqa, at Chavez Pass; Homolovi, near Winslow; and Sibabi, near Comar Spring. Archaeologists have found striking similarities in pottery design and architecture at these pueblo sites, indicating that much trading and travel tied these areas closely together.

One very well-used trail linked these various pueblos. This road extends south-southwest from the Hopis' First Mesa, past Comar Spring and Chandler Springs to Sunset Crossing on the Little Colorado, where Winslow is located today. Fording the river at Sunset Crossing, the trail then turns west-southwest, far enough south to avoid the impassable Canyon Diablo. Gradually ascending through Sunset Pass and Chavez Pass to Pine Springs and over a 7,000-foot crest, the trail then descends to the Verde Valley by way of Stoneman Lake and Rattlesnake Canyon down to Beaverhead.

From Walpi to Camp Verde, the trail is 145 miles long. The two major sections, which are separated by the Little Colorado, are uncommonly straight and direct. Considering the generally rough terrain covered by the trail, the route is remarkably level and free from obstruction. The trail climbs and descends over fairly gradual grades. Springs are found at intervals of fifteen to thirty miles along the trail. That was a day's march. And Sunset Crossing is by far the best of only a few fords on the Little Colorado. In most places, pockets of quicksand all along the riverbed make crossing dangerous, but here there is a firm rock bottom.

The Verde River enters the Verde Valley from the north through a narrow, deep canyon and flows southward out of the valley through another deep canyon. Other sharp, steep canyons—Sycamore, Oak Creek, Canyon Diablo, Hell Canyon, Beaver Creek, West Clear Creek, Fossil Creek—discourage travel almost everywhere in this region. Anyone who wants to get in or out of the valley has to climb, cross, and descend the 6,000-to-7,000 foot-high mountains that surround the valley.

The rough malpais rock above Beaverhead is by far the most challenging part of the trail, but its relatively gradual slope provides the least difficult access to the Verde Valley. Virtually every account by Spanish and Anglo travelers mentions the difficulty of this terrain.

In the late sixteenth century, Spanish explorers from Mexico marched up the Rio Grande Valley into what today is New Mexico, searching for mineral wealth and for Indians to convert to Christianity. In 1583, twenty-four years before the first English colonizers settled at Jamestown, Virginia, one of these explorers, Antonio de Espejo, used the old Hopi trail.

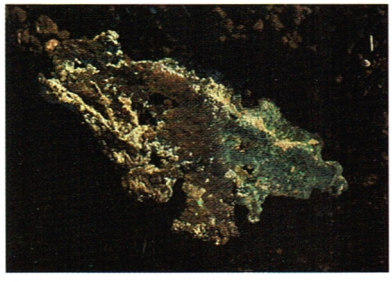
A prosperous rancher and merchant of northern Mexico, Espejo had left his home near Santa Barbara, in southern Chihuahua, on November 10, 1582, to rescue two Franciscan priests who had been captured by Indians near what today is Socorro, New Mexico. In addition to this motive to journey northward, Espejo was attempting to escape from an impending charge that he had murdered one of his ranch foremen. We can safely assume that dreams of discovering great deposits of gold and silver also influenced Espejo—just as it always inspired other Spanish explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Espejo and his party followed El Rio Grande del Norte northward from what today is El Paso, Texas. Discovering that the two priests had been killed by the Indians, Espejo elected to take advantage of the opportunity to explore the northern Rio Grande Valley for whatever mineral wealth it might possess. After reaching a point on the river about twenty miles west of where Santa Fe, New Mexico, is located today, he learned from the local natives about a rich mineral deposit, which they claimed lay far to the west. Immediately, Espejo and his party struck westward.

On March 14, 1583, the party reached Zuni pueblo, known to the Spanish as "Cíbola," near what today is the Arizona-New Mexico border. Here, they heard even more extravagant and exciting stories about the mines to the west, prompting Diego Pérez de Luxán, the expedition's chronicler, to report:

> Having received news of the mines, God willing, we are going to discover them . . . . I merely wish to say that if these are good mines, this will be the best land ever discovered.

Led by Zuni Indians, the Spaniards then rode up to the Hopi Mesas and the pueblo of Awatobi, the easternmost of the Hopi villages. The friendly Hopi people showed the Spanish generous hospitality and told them that "the mines were far away, that there was a scarcity of water, and that the route was over difficult ridges." But the eager-to-please Hopis volunteered to guide Espejo's party to the mines.



Top: Arizona's native copper
Bottom: Long Lake, a welcome wetland area

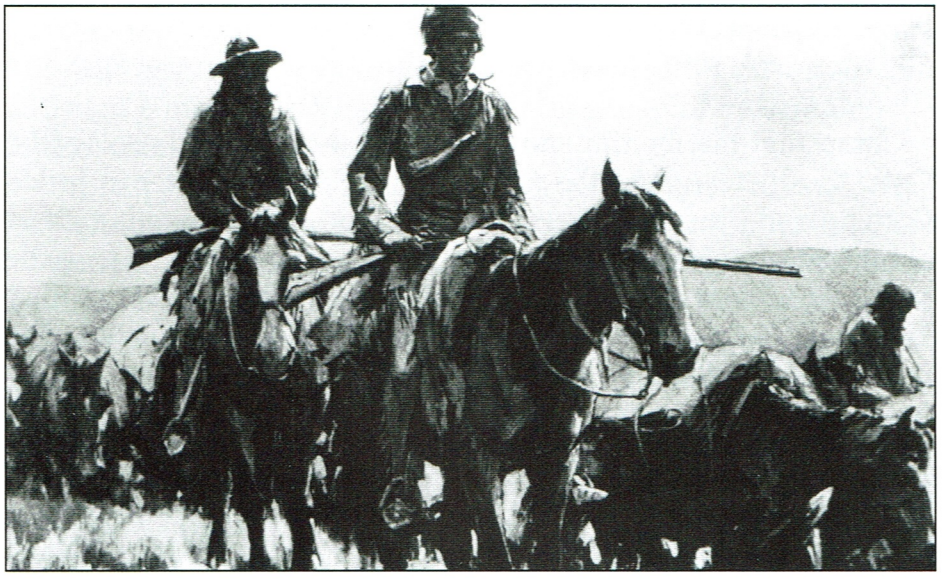
Leaving the rest of his men at Awatobi, Espejo left with four other Spaniards and the Hopi guides. They used the ancient, time-worn Indian trade and travel route—the Palatkwapi Trail—to go to the mines at Jerome.

Moving in a southwesterly direction, they stopped the first night at Comar Springs, which they named "El Ojo Triste" (Sorrowful Spring). On the 2nd of May, Espejo's party crossed the Little Colorado at Sunset Crossing, near where Winslow is today. Then, traveling in a more westward direction, the party followed a gradually ascending route that took them through both Sunset Pass and Chavez Pass.

In springtime, melting snow collects in the tanks and pools of the Colorado Plateau, and the party found plenty of water in Jack's Canyon and Sunset Tanks. Luxán wrote: "This route is rich in abundant pastures and juniper forests. These trees bear a fruit the size of hazelnuts and are quite tasty." The marshes, today called Long Lake and Soldier Lake, were filled with water. From here, the Spaniards could see the snow-capped San Franciso Peaks.

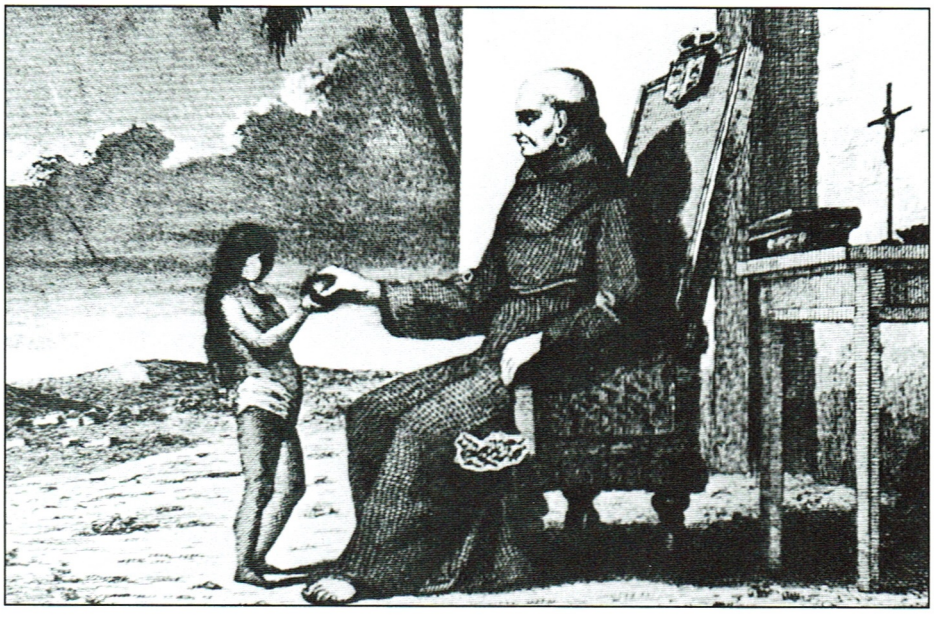
Continuing their journey, they passed by Pine Springs, went over the 7,000-foot crest, and then rapidly descended the steep Mogollon Rim to the Verde Valley by way of Stoneman Lake and Rattlesnake Canyon. Luxán described the area:

> The region is inhabited by mountain people, for it is a temperate land. During the night, some of them approached our horses, but fled when they heard unfamiliar sounds....We traveled through dense rough woodlands with bad trails, a very dangerous route in an enemy country. We descended a slope so steep and perilous that a mule belonging to Captain Antonio de Espejo fell and was dashed to pieces. We went down by a ravine so bad and craggy that we descended with difficulty....This place [the Verde Valley] is surrounded by an abundance of grapevines and by many walnut and other trees. This is a warm land in which there are parrots. The whole region is warm rather than cold.



Left: "Trek of the Mountain Men," a painting by W.H.D. Koerner taken from *Book of the American West*. Courtesy of Crown Publishers, Inc. Below: Woodcut of the Hopi Mesas taken from Ives, *Report Upon the Colorado River of the West Explored in 1857 and 1858*

Above: "Coronado's March" from *Drawings by Frederic Remington*, published by R. H. Russell (1897) Right: Padre blessing Indian children. Drawing from *California's Spanish Missions* by Spenser Crump courtesy of Trans-Anglo Books



After this ordeal, the five Spaniards were very grateful to arrive at Beaverhead Springs.

At the foot of Beaverhead's malpais, two Indian trails forked westward; one of them went southwest to Camp Verde, where a salt mine was located, and the other trail, the route to the mines, headed directly west toward Jerome.

As the Spanish approached, the Yavapai Indians, natives of the Verde Valley, were frightened by their horses and ran away. Soon, however, their curiosity overcame their fear. Singing of peace, they approached the Spaniards, offering baskets of piñon nuts and other food.

The explorers crossed Beaverhead Flat, forded Oak Creek near the present community of Cornville, and moved on to the Verde River, which Espejo named "El Río de Los Reyes," or "The River of Kings." On May 8, 1583, they reached the mines at what today is Jerome.

Luxán's very detailed account said of the Jerome site, ". . . the mines were so worthless that we did not find in any of them a trace of silver [or gold], as they were copper mines, and poor." Espejo's official report stated:

> I found the mines and took from them with my own hands ores, which, according to experts on the matter, are very rich and contain a great deal of silver.

In any event, Espejo was not impressed enough to stay longer. He returned immediately with his party to Awatobi and then to Zuni. The men were back in Mexico by September 1583.

Above: Piñon nuts were part of the Verde Valley's bountiful harvest. Below: Rocky bottom near Sunset Crossing, one of the few safe places to cross the Little Colorado River

Fifteen years later, another Spanish expedition went to investigate the mines. Don Juan de Oñate, the first governor of New Mexico, dispatched to central Arizona Captain Marcos Farfán de los Godos and eight companions. Their orders were to reconnoiter the area. Like Espejo, Farfán went first to the Hopi villages. Then, in November of 1598, he left for the mines, probably from Awatobi.

The record of Farfán's expedition strongly suggests that he followed the route Espejo had used fifteen years earlier. They crossed the Little Colorado River, which Farfán recorded as being "fairly wide, carried considerable water, had many cottonwoods, level banks, and little pasture," most likely at Sunset Crossing's rocky ford. Near Hay Lake, they found many "Jumanas" Indians, who offered them powdered ores and a tray of ground dates and some pieces of venison. "In exchange," Farfán wrote, "this witness gave them more beads and presents and begged them to lead him to the place where they obtained the metal."

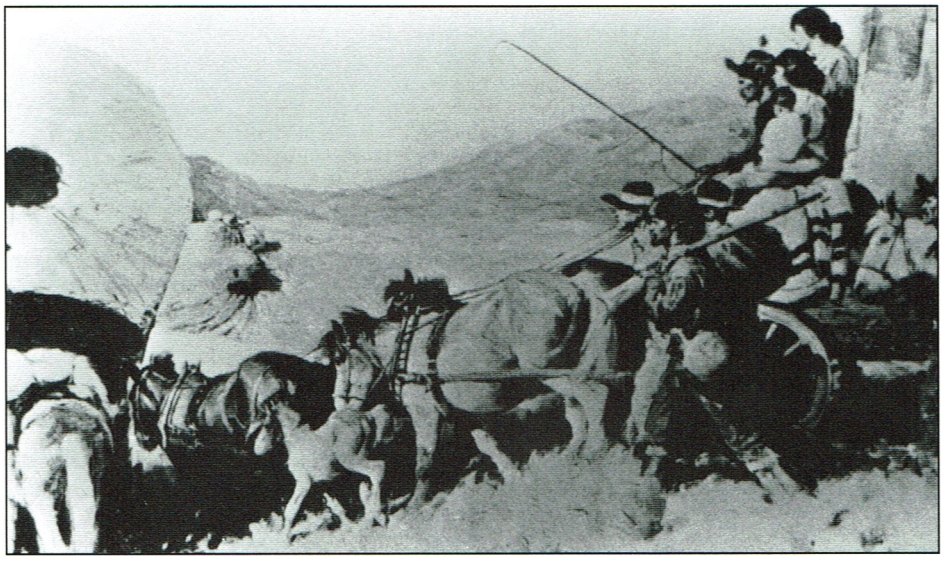
"Spaniards Crossing the Little Colorado."
Painting by Joe Rodriguez courtesy of Mrs. Vada Rodriguez

Marching over the high country, with snow up to their knees, Farfán and his men crossed the divide and descended into the Verde Valley, where they saw fine pastures and abundant wildlife. They camped on the north side of Beaver Creek and, like Espejo's party, forded Oak Creek near Cornville before crossing to the west bank of the Verde River near modern-day Bridgeport. After camping one night at what today is called Haskell Springs, they hiked up to the mines at Jerome and staked about seventy mineral claims. The Spaniards then went back to New Mexico to report their discoveries to Governor Oñate.

Governor Oñate was sufficiently impressed to visit the Verde Valley, most assuredly by way of the Palatkwapi Trail, on a trip from northern New Mexico to California in 1605. Oñate, as it turned out, was the last of the Spanish explorers to travel the Palatkwapi Trail.

Subsequently, on Spanish and other European maps, central Arizona became known as "Tierra Incognita" (unknown land), a term used up until the middle of the nineteenth century. "Despoblado" (unpopulated place) also appeared on maps to denote this region.

More than two hundred years passed before white men again traveled the Palatkwapi Trail. Records hint that some mountain men and sheepherders used the trail between 1820 and 1850. But no detailed accounts have been found. Interest in this area increased, however, shortly after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the United States' war with Mexico in 1848. Americans eager to make use of this new land began to look for an overland trail and railroad route from Santa Fe to California.



"On the Santa Fe Trail," painting by W.H.D. Koerner from *Book of the American West*. Courtesy of Crown Publishers, Inc.

Lieutenant Amiel W. Whipple and Lorenzo Sitgreaves were the first military men to traverse northern Arizona. Neither used the Palatkwapi Trail. Whipple, who reached the area in 1853, was investigating the possibilities for building a railroad near the 35th Parallel. This route would link the Mississippi River basin with the Pacific Coast. His route across northern Arizona became known as the "Whipple Road." The location of this road would play an important role in affecting the later use of the Palatkwapi Trail by Anglo settlers in central Arizona.

In 1858, Lieutenant Joseph Christmas Ives, on a mission to explore northern Arizona, crossed the Little Colorado near present-

day Leupp, traveled upstream along the river's east side to Sunset Crossing, then followed the old Palatkwapi Trail to the Hopi Second Mesa.

On February 24, 1863, at the height of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed an "Organic Act," which created the Arizona Territory as a separate entity from New Mexico. Quite by coincidence, two-and-a-half months later, a party of mineral prospectors in Arizona found gold about five miles south of the present town of Prescott. Access to the mines again became an issue. The word spread quickly, and General James Carleton, Commanding General of the U.S. Army, Department of New Mexico, issued an order that the first Arizona territorial capital be established somewhere near the newly discovered gold fields. He then sent an expedition party to the area to select an appropriate site.

Soon after this, President Lincoln chose officials for the new territory and named John N. Goodwin as governor. In turn, the War Department told General Carleton that he was to provide an escort to see that the gubernatorial party enjoyed a safe, swift, and comfortable journey from Santa Fe to Arizona.

The site Carleton selected for the new capital was approximately twenty-five miles north of what would become Prescott. He named the site Fort Whipple, in honor of the man who had explored the region ten years earlier–and who became a Union fatality in the battle of Chancellorsville, Virginia, in early May of 1863.

On November 24, 1863, General Carleton ordered Lieutenant Colonel J. Francisco Chaves, First Cavalry, New Mexico Volunteers, to escort the officials to Arizona by the "Whipple Route." Chaves left Albuquerque with his charges on December 8 and, after crossing New Mexico, followed the Whipple Road to the southern base of the San Francisco Mountains. Here, at Antelope Springs (where Flagstaff would be founded thirteen years later), Chaves left the Whipple Road and headed west-southwest around the head tributaries of rugged and forbidding Sycamore Canyon to Cienega Creek. The party arrived at Fort Whipple on January 22, 1864.

As a postscript to the body of the long letter ordering Colonel Chaves to go to Arizona, General Carleton wrote:

> In returning from Fort Whipple it may be considered important that you come by the way of the upper branches of the Salinas [Salt] and San Francisco [Verde] rivers and so on to Zuni. This route, in that event, you are at liberty to pursue on your homeward journey.

He was referring to the Palatkwapi Trail.

The records do not indicate how General Carleton knew about the old Indian and Spanish trail. Perhaps early nineteenth-century trappers or explorers of the region had found the old path and passed the word along. It also is possible that prospectors who had

Above: Sycamore Canyon, typical of the lovely but difficult terrain surrounding the Verde Valley
Right: Road descending into Rattlesnake Canyon

Left: The infamous malpais along Rattlesnake Canyon
Bottom: The Verde River, "El Río de los Reyes" on Spanish maps of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

combed the central Arizona mountains for other gold deposits during the summer and fall of 1863 had heard of or seen some signs of the route. A third possibility is that an earlier military party sent to the area in July 1863 gained information about the Palatkwapi Trail and reported it to General Carleton. We do know that Carleton hoped that this trail would be a better route to central Arizona.

With no guides and only a small amount of understanding about the Palatkwapi Trail, Colonel Chaves left Fort Whipple for New Mexico on April 11. He had half rations for thirty days and a command consisting of two commissioned officers, thirty-five enlisted men, and fifteen civilian army quartermaster's employees. The Chaves party traveled south from Del Rio Springs by way of what today is Granite Dells to King Woolsey's rancho. Descending Copper Canyon, the group reached the Verde River. This stream was called the "San Francisco River" in those days—on the erroneous assumption that it drained the San Francisco Mountains to the north.

On April 16, Chaves traveled northeast, forded the Verde River, crossed over the limestone bluffs near the mouth of Oak Creek, and picked up the Jerome branch of the Palatkwapi Trail on Beaverhead Flat. From there, the party made its way to the foot of the steep and rocky Beaverhead malpais, apparently on the same path used by Espejo in 1583. At this time of the year, melted snow runoff flowed down from the Colorado Plateau and through the Verde River's feeder streams. Chaves and his men saw water in Dry Beaver Creek, Rattlesnake Canyon, and Rarick Canyon.

The next morning, Chaves and his command began to ascend the Mogollon Rim on the rocky ridge between Rattlesnake Canyon and Rarick Canyon. They found the road painfully rough and slow.

On April 18th, the party camped at a place Chaves called "Ben's tanks." This site, a small seep, must have been today's Rattlesnake Tank since there is no other spring between the foot of the malpais ridge and Stoneman Lake. Two days later, Chaves reached Stoneman Lake, which he named "Lake Carleton." He described the lake as "a large basin of water about fifty feet deep." The group moved on, but progress was slow. Between April 17 and April 21, they had traveled only sixteen miles on the Mogollon Rim's malpais.

At this point, Chaves made a very serious mistake, one that would prove to be almost tragic. He had reached a fork in the trail—one trail led northeastward and the other, which is the Palatkwapi route to Sunset Crossing, headed east-southeast. Chaves chose the road to the left and then marched toward the northeast.

On April 22, the party camped at Grapevine Spring. The next morning, they descended a steep draw into Kinnikinick Canyon, a branch of Grapevine Canyon, which is one of the two main tributaries of Canyon Diablo. Continuing in a northeasterly direction, they were stopped by a canyon that turned suddenly to the northwest.

A short distance later, the party made a dry camp, and Chaves studied the obstacle before them. "The cañon," he wrote, "is about two hundred feet deep with a wall of perpendicular sandstone; I am now satisfied that this is the Diablo Cañon of [Lt. Amiel W.] Whipple." His deduction was correct. And he now well-understood the significance of its infernal name.

By this time very puzzled and anxious, the caravan followed the canyon in a northwesterly direction and, in a few hours, made a difficult but successful crossing.

After camping (with brackish water) near the Little Colorado, the weary band picked up Lieutenant Whipple's road along the Little Colorado and headed back to New Mexico.

In his report to General Carleton, Chaves accurately acknowledged that he should have gone further to the south at Pratt Park and admitted that in doing so he would have avoided the Canyon Diablo impediment. He confessed, too, that he may have miscalculated the distances by too many miles; "people generally do when their mules are broken down and the road is heavy." But, overall, he felt that the Copper Canyon-Beaverhead route was infinitely better than the more northerly route from Sunset Crossing to Fort Whipple by way of Leupp and Antelope Springs and around the head of Sycamore Canyon.

The report of his experience so impressed his commanding general that soon the route became known at that post, at other military posts in New Mexico, and among civilian travelers as the "Chaves Cut-off" or "Chaves Trail."

"On the March—The Advance Guard" from *Frederic Remington: The American West*. Courtesy of Bonanza Books

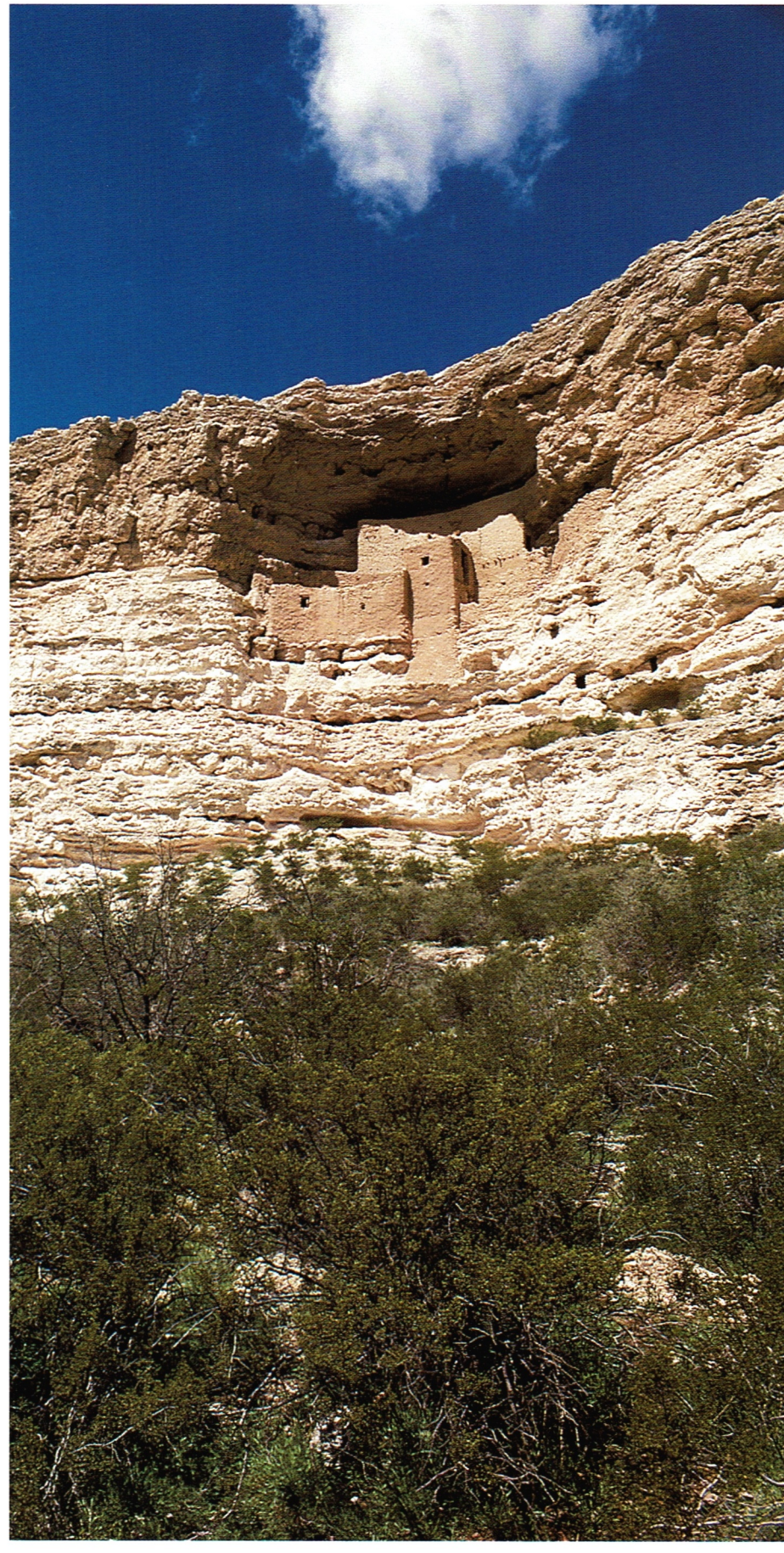
On June 12, 1864, General Carleton issued orders that Chaves was to guide troops and supplies back to Fort Whipple by the new road. The orders also directed that en route the men "improve the road by cutting out trees and brush, digging down banks, etc., and in all other ways assist. . . in overcoming all obstacles to the safe prosecution of [the] journey."

Chaves returned to Arizona and reached Sunset Crossing on July 14. Here, however, he chose not to follow the Palatkwapi Trail west-southwest toward Sunset Pass but, instead, led the expedition more directly west. After about twenty miles "over a rolling prairie, gradually ascending and susceptible of a good wagon road," he found his progress blocked again by Canyon Diablo.

Confused and frustrated, Chaves could not find a way to cross the steep canyon with his horses and wagons. He returned to Sunset Crossing and decided to go to Fort Whipple using his trail of the previous winter.

Starting eastward on August 5, 1864, from Fort Whipple, Chaves tried again to return to New Mexico by way of the Palatkwapi Trail. Again, he failed at Pratt Park to take the trail to the right, and, for the *third* time, Canyon Diablo forced him to the north before he could move ahead. He reached the Little Colorado on August 13 and from there hastened back to New Mexico.

Chaves apparently was unable to realize the true advantage of the trail from Sunset Crossing, through Chavez Pass, to Stoneman



Opposite: The western edge of Canyon Diablo. The infantryman is taking part in a reenactment of Crook's crossing.
Right: Montezuma Castle, the "Palatkwapi" of Hopi prehistory?

Lake. Nevertheless, he reported to General Carleton that "if the Cutoff becomes used as a permanent wagon road and is repaired, there will be a further saving of about twenty-five miles," as opposed to the route to Fort Whipple just south of the San Francisco Mountains.

The *Arizona Journal-Miner*, a newspaper in Prescott, and the official military documents of that time helped to give the road between Fort Whipple and Sunset Crossing the popular name of the "Chavez Trail." Apparently, however, J. Francisco Chaves never passed through Chavez Pass!

In 1866, the army established a post called Camp Lincoln on the Chavez Trail, at the mouth of Beaver Creek, to protect settlers in the area. Later, this post was moved a mile south to higher ground and renamed "Camp Verde." During the year 1870, soldiers and settlers worked to improve the road from Beaverhead to Stoneman Lake. As a result, more immigrants to the Verde Valley and Prescott used the trail.

In 1871, General George Crook, the celebrated Indian fighter, came to Arizona to make peace with the Apaches. On his way to Camp Verde, he came upon "the wagon-road from the Little Colorado to Camp Verde." Captain John G. Bourke, today increasingly celebrated as an important and acutely observant ethnologist, described their journey on the trail:

> We were getting rapidly down from the summit of the Mogollon, and entering a country exactly similar to that of the major portion of Southern Arizona. There was the same vegetation of yucca, mescal, nopal, Spanish bayonet, giant cactus, palo verde, hediondilla, mesquite, and sage-brush, laden with the dust of summer, but there was also a considerable sprinkling of the cedar, scrub-pine, scrub-oak, madrono, or mountain mahogany, and some little mulberry.
>
> Near this trail there are to be seen several archaeological curiosities worthy of a visit from the students of any part of the world. There is the wonderful "Montezuma's Well," a lakelet of eighty or ninety feet in depth, situated in the centre of a subsidence of rock, in which there is a cave once inhabited by a pre-historic people, while around the circumference of the pool itself are the cliff-dwellings, of which so many examples are to be encountered in the vicinity.
>
> One of these cliff-dwellings, in excellent preservation, is the six-story house of stone [Montezuma Castle] on the Beaver Creek, [a stream] which issues from the cave at Montezuma's Wells, and flows into the Verde River, near the post of the same name.
>
> I am unable to explain exactly how he did it, but I can assure my readers that [Gen.] Crook learned, while on that march, the name of every plant, animal, and mineral passed near the trail, as well as the uses to which the natives put them, each and all; likewise the habits of the birds, reptiles, and animals, and the course and general character of all the streams, little or big.

A year later, Crook began building the General Crook Road from Camp Verde to Fort Apache, at the foot of the Mogollon Rim in east-central Arizona.

General George Crook. Photograph courtesy of the Sharlot Hall Museum

In October 1874, Lieutenant Charles King led twenty soldiers from Camp Verde eastward up and over the trail to pursue a band of Tonto Apaches who had stolen cattle. The Indians ambushed King and several of his men at Sunset Pass. King, who was severely wounded, was saved, Hollywood style, by some of his Fifth Cavalry comrades. He wrote a novel many years later based on this experience and entitled it *Sunset Pass*.

In April of 1875, Martha Summerhayes, a young army wife, left Fort Apache, in Arizona's White Mountains, to travel to Camp Verde via the trail. Mrs. Summerhayes was accompanied by her officer husband and their small baby. The rest of the party included four wagons and their drivers, a Mexican guide, and six armed cavalrymen. In her classic memoir about military life in Arizona, *Vanished Arizona*, she recounted the difficult experience. As the command made camp at Sunset Crossing, with the banks of the Little Colorado River now swollen with run-off water, Mrs. Summerhayes noted that:

> The sun was gradually sinking in the west, but the heat down in that alkali riverbottom even at that early season of the year was most uncomfortable. I was worn out with fright and fatigue; my poor child cried piteously and incessantly. Nothing was of any avail to soothe him. After the tents were pitched and the camp-fires made, some warm water was brought, and I tried to wash away some of the dust from him, but the alkali water only irritated his delicate skin, and his head, where it had lain on my warm arm, was inflamed by the constant rubbing. It began to break out in ugly blisters; I was in despair.
>
> We were about as wretchedly off as two human beings could be, and live, it seemed to me. The disappointment at not getting across the river, combined with the fear that the Indians were still in the neighborhood, added to my nervousness and produced an exhaustion which, under other circumstances, would have meant collapse.
>
> The mournful and demonical cries of the coyotes filled the night; they seemed to come close to the tent, and their number seemed to be legion. I lay with eyes wide open, watching for the day to come, and resolving each minute that if I ever escaped alive from that lonely river-bottom with its burning alkali, and its millions of howling coyotes, I would never, *never*, risk being placed in such a situation again.

Top: Fort Apache, 1896.
Photograph courtesy of Northern Arizona University Special Collections.
Bottom: Martha Summerhayes, from the frontispiece of *Vanished Arizona*

The following morning, the party hitched up ten mules to one of the heavily loaded baggage wagons and tried to cross the river. But the quicksand forced the men to bring the mules back, leaving the wagon mired in the middle of the stream. They then built a boat to float the wagons and people across the river.

On the southwest side of Sunset Crossing, they picked up the Palatkwapi Trail and began to march westward, ascending toward the Mogollon Rim. They stopped at Updyke's Tanks and Jay Cox Tank before crossing the divide separating the Little Colorado and Verde River watersheds. At just about the time Mrs. Summerhayes felt that the party "had reached the limit of endurance, . . .they emerged from a mountain pass," and there, from "a high green *mesa*," she saw Stoneman Lake:

> . . . a beautiful blue sheet of water lying there away below us. It was good to our tired eyes, which had gazed upon nothing but burnt rocks and alkali plains for so many days. Our camp was beautiful beyond description, and lay near the edge of the *mesa*, whence we could look down upon the lovely lake. It was a complete surprise to us, as points of scenery were not much known or talked about then in Arizona. Ponds and lakes were unheard of. They did not seem to exist in that drear land of arid wastes . . . . But here was a real Italian lake, a lake as blue as the skies above us. We feasted our eyes and our very souls upon it.

Above: The treacherous and dreaded quicksand of the Little Colorado River
Below: Stoneman Lake

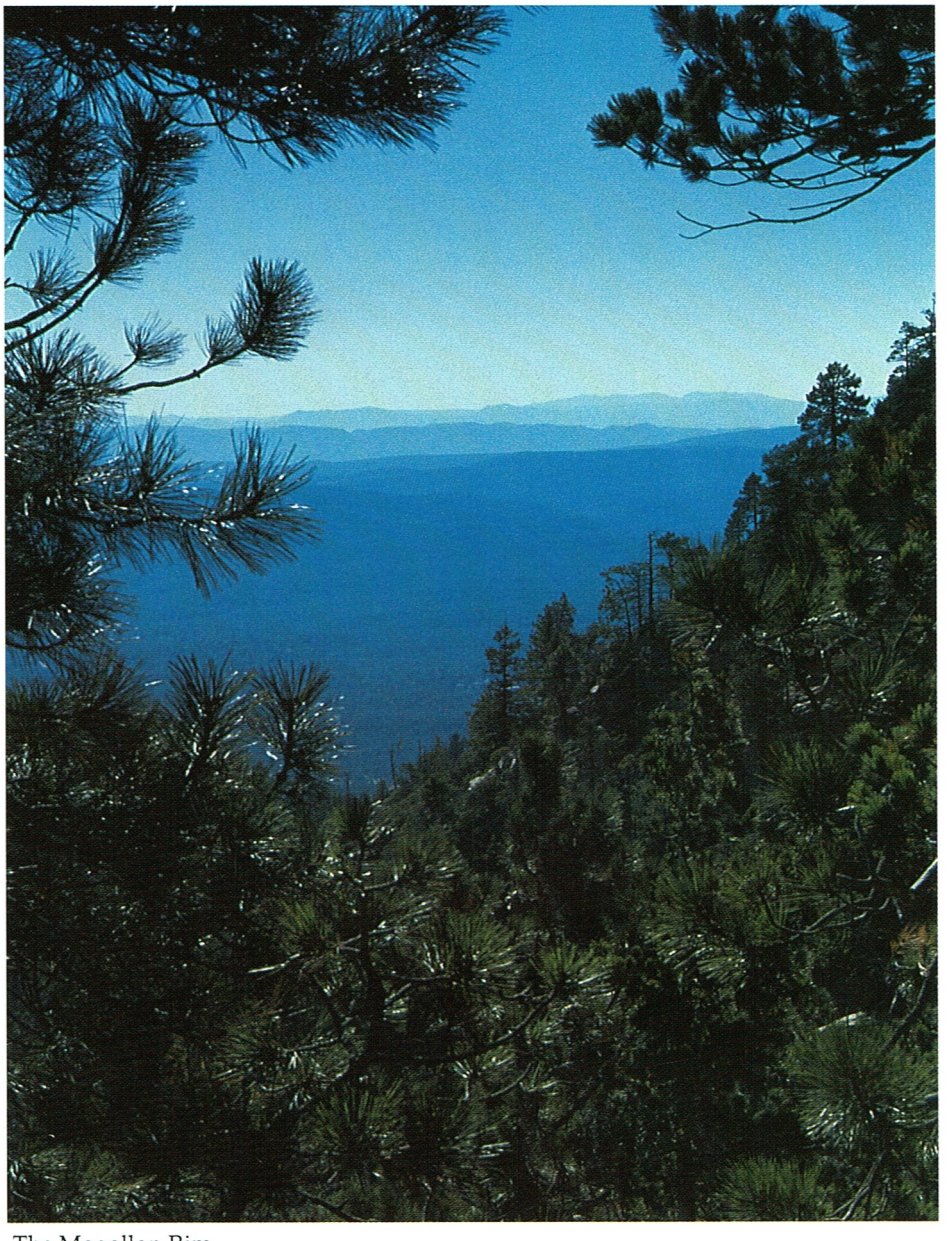
Later, when she wrote her book, Mrs. Summerhayes remembered another particularly trying experience—the rough road from Stoneman Lake to Beaverhead:

> Indeed, at every stage of the road we saw evidences of hard travel, exhausted cattle, anxious teamsters, hunger and thirst, despair, starvation, and death. The road was worse than any we had yet encountered, so I tried to walk a part of the way. We clattered down a road so near the edge of the precipice that I was frightened beyond everything; my senses nearly left me. Down and around, this way and that, near the edge, then back again, swaying, swerving, pitching, the gravel clattering over the precipice, the six mules trotting their fastest.

That night they camped at Beaverhead Spring. The Summerhayes party reached Camp Verde more or less intact, but not every wagon that tried to cross Beaverhead's malpais completed the journey.

Another traveler, Lydia E. English, kept a travel diary of her trip by wagon from Kansas to Arizona in 1875. Leaving Concordia, Kansas, on September 20, her party arrived at Sunset Crossing on November 23. Two days later, they stayed at Rock Station, where they "met quite an intelligent, pleasant young man . . .[who] is carrying the mail to New Fort Wingate [New Mexico]." In lightly falling snow, she reached Pine Springs on Sunday, November 28, over "the roughest roads with rock I ever saw."

Above: Wagons and mules—frequent travelers on the Palatkwapi Trail in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Photograph courtesy of United States Department of Highways
Right: Heading out. Photograph courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society and the U.S. Forest Service



The Mogollon Rim

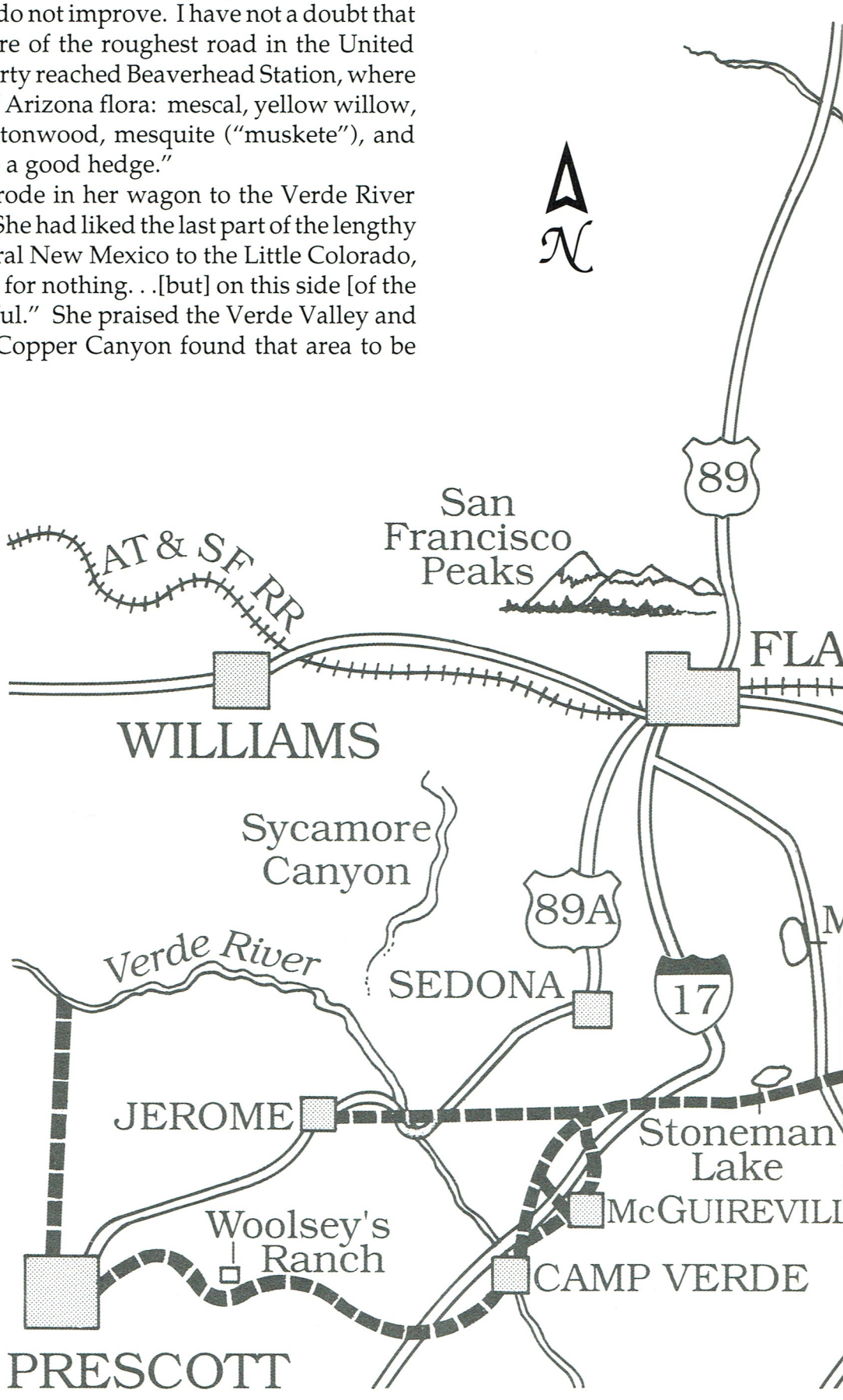
The next day, she recorded in her diary some of her perceptions of the area:

> Nine weeks from home. Crossed the top of the Moquion [Mogollon] range to-day. The weather beautiful. Nearly out of the snow; no danger of being snowed in now. The danger of snow storms is from Rock Station here. Stoneman's lake is a curious place. It is about 300 acres that seem to have sunk about 300 feet; high walls all around. It is made by springs, and is almost covered with geese and ducks. There are several kinds of timber growing on the top and this side of the range. There is pine, pinon, juniper, fir, cedar, white oak, live oak, quaking asp[en?], cottonwood and witch hazel—I believe that is all. There are some beautiful valleys, or basins, with heavy pine forests all around. Can get water by digging three or four feet. Would make beautiful farms, or ranches.

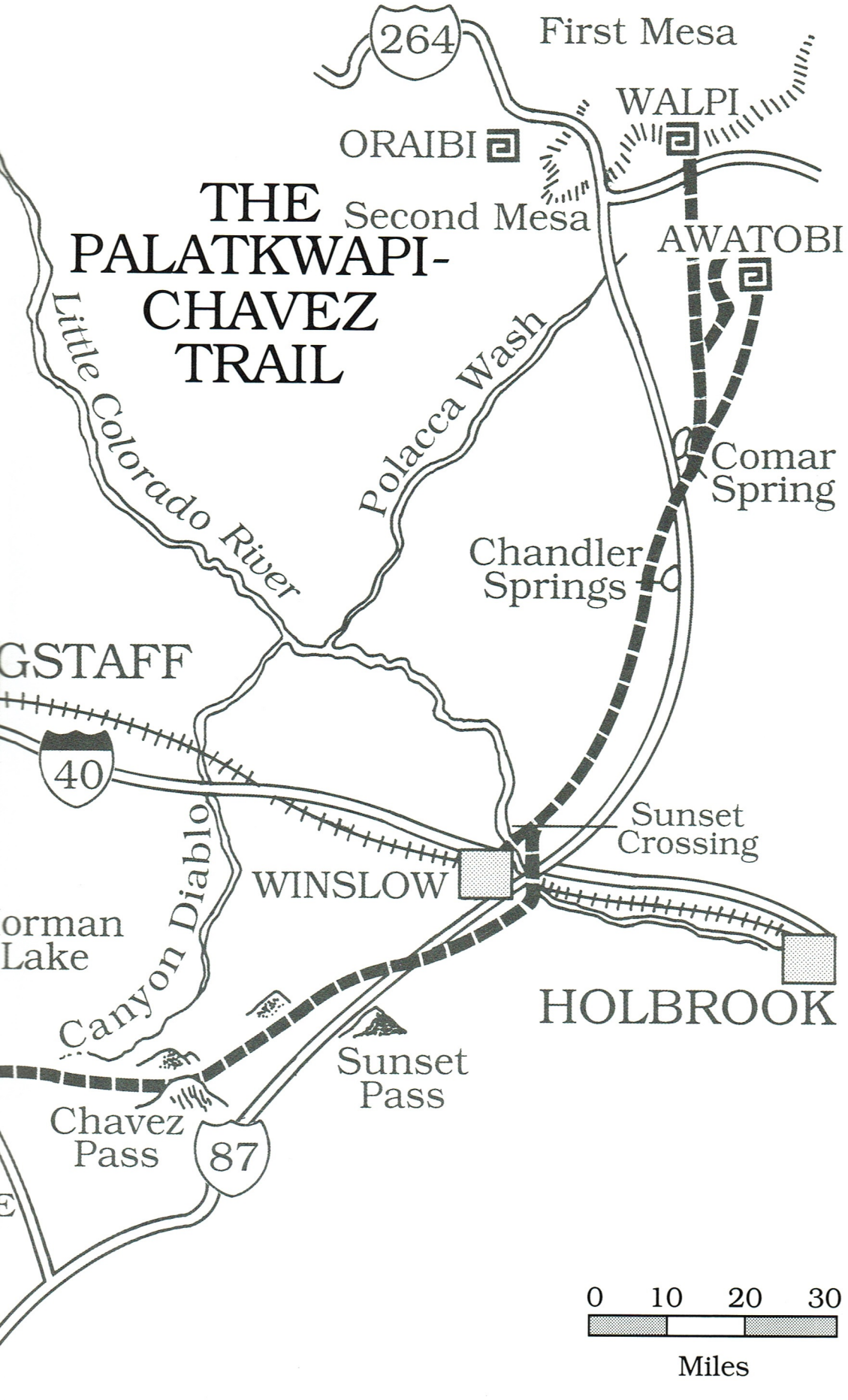
Left: Wagon wheel at edge of Rattlesnake Canyon, a reminder of the difficulties faced by travelers through the region
Below: Rattlesnake Tank

At Rattlesnake Tank, Lydia expressed her opinion of Beaverhead's malpais: "The roads do not improve. I have not a doubt that there are about 40 miles here of the roughest road in the United States." The next day, the party reached Beaverhead Station, where she continued her catalog of Arizona flora: mescal, yellow willow, basswood, black locust, cottonwood, mesquite ("muskete"), and "cat claws that would make a good hedge."

On December first, she rode in her wagon to the Verde River crossing near Camp Verde. She had liked the last part of the lengthy trip and said that from central New Mexico to the Little Colorado, "the country is simply good for nothing. . .[but] on this side [of the river], the country is beautiful." She praised the Verde Valley and after reaching Prescott via Copper Canyon found that area to be beautiful, too.



The Palatkwapi Trail was traveled extensively from prehistoric times to the nineteenth century. Although portions have fallen into disuse today, other sections of the trail are now hidden by the pavement of modern highways.


264
First Mesa
WALPI
ORAIBI
THE PALATKWAPI-CHAVEZ TRAIL
Second Mesa
AWATOBI
Little Colorado River
Polacca Wash
Comar Spring
Chandler Springs
GSTAFF
40
Sunset Crossing
WINSLOW
orman Lake
Canyon Diablo
HOLBROOK
Sunset Pass
Chavez Pass
87
0 10 20 30
Miles

By 1876, the Star Line Transportation Company had established a stage route from Prescott to Santa Fe, carrying mail and passengers. There were stops to change drivers, mules, or horses at Camp Verde, Beaverhead, Pine Springs, Chavez Pass, Rock Station, and Brigham City. The fare for one person was $75, and the wagons, traveling day and night, made the 500-mile trip in seven-and-a-half days.

One of the most remarkable women in Arizona's history, Sharlot Hall, like Lydia English also from Kansas, left that state in 1881 as a small girl and journeyed to Prescott with her family. Sharlot Hall's party also took the Palatkwapi Trail westward from the Little Colorado River. Later, she remembered that the group would have made little progress through "that great, solemn Mogollon forest with the pines standing four to six feet deep in snow" between Chavez Pass and Stoneman Lake had they not followed a military wagon train that broke down the wintry six-foot plus snow drifts. Moreover, she recalled, "We were lost about half the time for my uncle, who drove in the lead, had a genius for taking sheep trails and wood roads." They then descended the malpais above Beaverhead. It was just as much an ordeal for them as it had been for Espejo and Martha Summerhayes and all the others. The Hall family finally reached Prescott in February 1882.

The Significance of the PALATKWAPI TRAIL

That part of the Palatkwapi Trail from Sunset Crossing to Awatobi and Walpi was used continuously by Hopis and a few others well into the twentieth century. However, people traveled the Sunset Crossing to Camp Verde section of the trail less and less after the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad was completed across northern Arizona in 1883. The Star Line Transportation Company had discontinued service over the Chaves part of the Palatkwapi Trail one year earlier when the company had established a new route in 1882 from Prescott to Brigham City via Flagstaff.

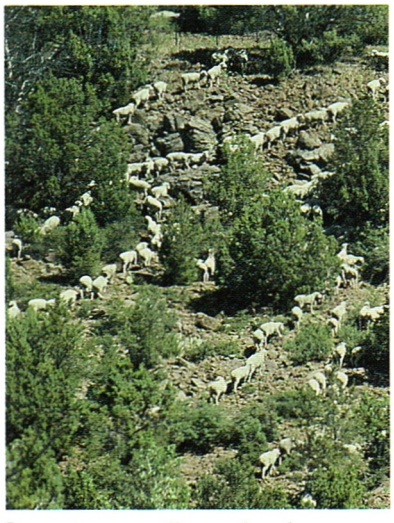
Around the turn of the century, Verde Valley ranchers constructed more direct roads to Flagstaff, and, in 1912, Yavapai County built a better road—the "Blue Grade"—to Stoneman Lake. By 1950, very few people remembered or had ever known about the old Hopi trail that had served so many people for such a long time.

In 1960, engineers decided that the rough but comparatively gradual malpais ridge above Beaverhead was the best place to bring U.S. Interstate Highway 17 down the Mogollon Rim and off the Colorado Plateau. The route that they chose closely parallels the Palatkwapi Trail.

Today, the trail is all but forgotten. Its use is limited to Anglo, Mexican, and Basque sheepherders who follow the trail as they drive sheep to Arizona's high country for the summer and to hiking groups such as the Sedona Westerners, who climb the rocky path used by Espejo and all the others.

The Palatkwapi Trail deserves better. It is a fine example of an unusually extended relationship between people and their environment. Culturally and geographically, the trail has extraordinary qualities. It has a definite identity. It appears to be an important part of Hopi history. It was shared, over time, by ancient and modern Indians and by Spaniards, Mexicans, and Anglos.

Moreover, the trail symbolizes the values of the diverse cultures who made use of it: the disciplined, quiet, moderation of the Hopis; the passionate search for empire and mineral wealth of the Spanish; and the aggressive, exploitive, adventurous frontier spirit of the Anglo-Americans. For these reasons, it is hard to believe that almost no one today knows about the rich heritage that the Palatkwapi Trail provides, a heritage that ties this region together historically, geographically, and culturally.



Opposite, top: "Beaverhead Station," painting by Charlie Dye courtesy of the Gaspard House Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Opposite, bottom: Sharlot Hall at age twelve. Photograph courtesy of the Sharlot Hall Museum
Above: Today, sheep are driven along a portion of the Palatkwapi Trail.

About the Author

James W. Byrkit is Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Northern Arizona University. Born in Jerome, Arizona, he was raised in nearby Clarkdale, where his father was smelter superintendent. Dr. Byrkit has a B.S. from the Menlo School of Business, M.A.s from Arizona State University and Clairmont Graduate School, and a Ph.D. from Clairmont. He is the author of *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor-Management War, 1901-1921*, which was published in 1982 by University of Arizona Press, and numerous articles.

Palatkwapi: A Trail of Three Cultures was first produced as a slideshow in 1982. A grant for the project from the Arizona Humanities Council allowed Dr. Byrkit and photographer Doyen Salsig to produce the 28 -minute slideshow and make it available to groups all over the state. We wish to thank the Humanities Council for their permission to use some of the slideshow materials in this issue of *Plateau*.

Suggested Reading

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Dr. Byrkit would like to dedicate this issue of *Plateau* to the Northern Arizona Natural History Association (NANHA), which was founded in 1987 to sponsor, prepare, publish, and make available to the public books, pamphlets, folders, maps, and other materials on the history, archaeology, and biology of the public lands of the Southwest. For additional information, contact:

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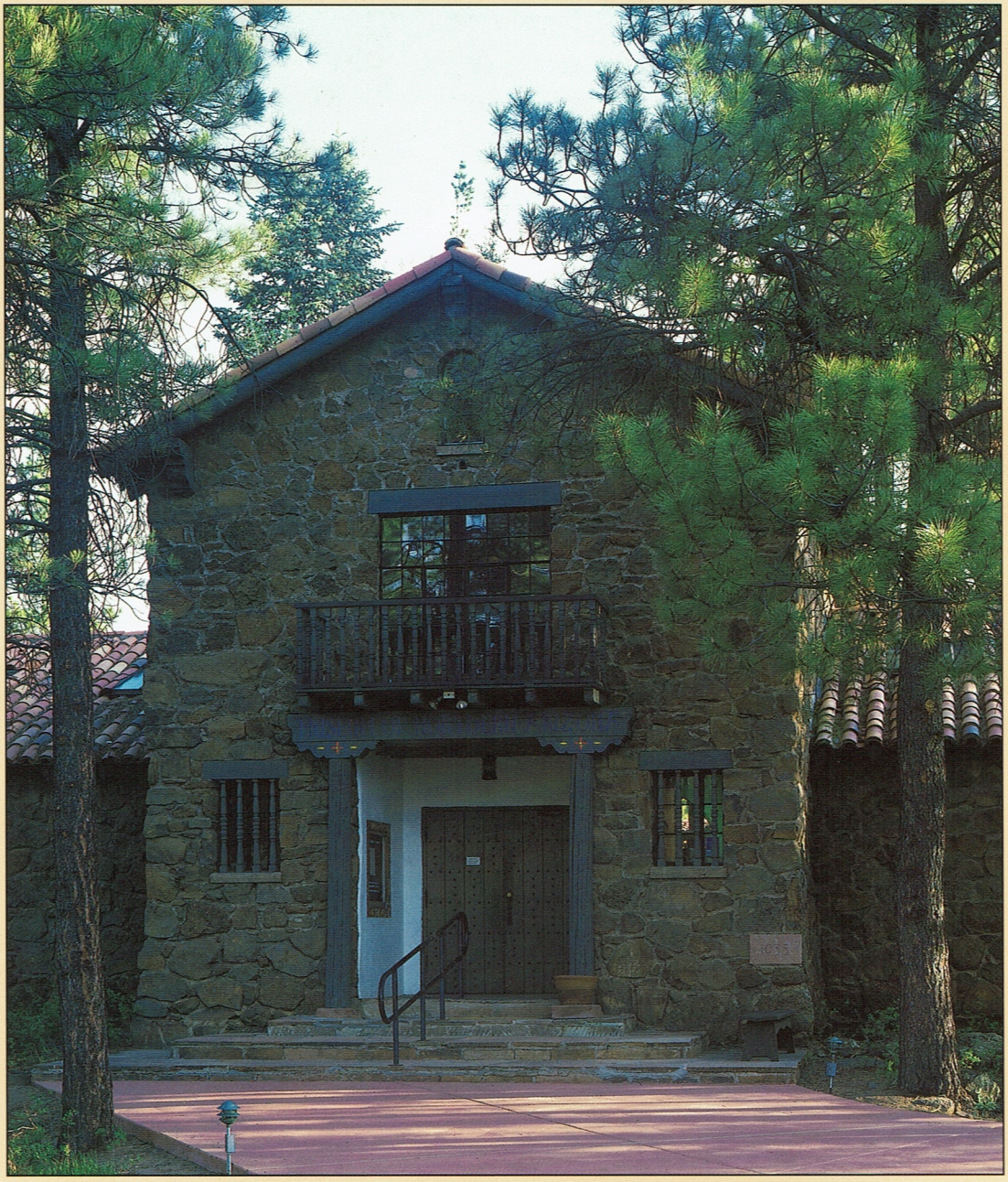
Flagstaff, Arizona 86002

This issue of *Plateau* was made possible by an endowment from the Margaret T. Morris Foundation.

Plateau Managing Editor: Diana Clark Lubick
Graphic Design by Dianne Moen Zahnle
Color Separations by Color Graphics
Printing by Woods Lithographics

Cover: On the Palatkwapi Trail, looking toward the Hopi Mesas

The Museum of Northern Arizona



Photograph by Gene Balzer

Founded in 1928, the Museum of Northern Arizona is known worldwide for its collections, research, and exhibitions. One of the few institutions in the Southwest to combine an exhibit program and a major research center, MNA features galleries interpreting both the natural and cultural history of the Colorado Plateau.

ISBN 0-89734-090-6